

VZCZCXRO0911  
OO RUEHCN RUEHGH  
DE RUEHIN #2547/01 3340946  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 300946Z NOV 07  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7482  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7480  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 9072  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 9285  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 2223  
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU PRIORITY 0683  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY 8766  
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI PRIORITY 1499  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG PRIORITY 6197  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TAIPEI 002547

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2032

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: KMT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MA YING-JEOU ON  
ELECTION, MARTIAL LAW, CROSS-STRAIT, AND PERSONAL SECURITY

REF: A. TAIPEI 2503

[1](#)B. TAIPEI 2537

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young. Reason(s):  
1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou met with the Director on November 29 to discuss upcoming legislative and presidential elections and election disputes.

While Ma said he was not worried about President Chen's loose talk of martial law earlier this week, he is concerned that Chen might do something else less dramatic, such as declaring a state of emergency. Ma indicated that he sees his "one-China, different interpretations" and Beijing's "1992 consensus" formulations as viable grounds for cross-Straits dialogue in the event he wins the presidency. He acknowledged some concern for his own personal security during the upcoming campaigns. The Director urged Ma and the KMT not to allow campaign differences, such as the voting format dispute, to grow into an irreconcilable standoff between ruling and opposition parties, which could produce confrontation and damage Taiwan's democratic image. The Director noted that he had passed a similar message to the President earlier this week (Note: Later the same day, November 29, he called to relay the same message to DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Ma Ying-jeou met with the Director on Nov 29, in an ongoing series of regular meetings with both presidential candidates in the run up to the March 22 presidential election. Ma arrived at the meeting directly from speaking at a 300-plus joint lunch of the American, European, British and Australian-New Zealand Chambers of Commerce. He was accompanied by KMT legislator Su Chi, his senior foreign policy advisor.

One-Step vs. Two-Step Voting Dispute  
-----

[1](#)3. (C) Ma told the Director that resolution of the ongoing voting format controversy (Ref A) would depend on what the Central Election Commission (CEC) does. He noted the CEC has scheduled a meeting with city and county election commissions next week to discuss the controversy. Ma did not appear

especially concerned over the dispute, stressing there are six weeks remaining before the Legislative Yuan January 12 (LY) elections, sufficient time for a resolution. (Comment: Separately the same day, November 29, there were a number of indications that both sides are actively considering ways to bridge the gap between the two formats.)

14. (C) While the controversy itself is "not a big deal," Ma continued, this blatant effort by the ruling DPP and the CEC to increase voter turn-out in the LY and presidential elections is of concern. Why, he asked rhetorically, did the CEC alter the two-step referendum process used in the two March 2004 referenda. Because, answering his own question, the DPP is trying to use referenda to boost the total vote. By contrast, he claimed, a bit disingenuously, the KMT is only motivated by its concern about order in the polling stations.

15. (C) The Director surmised that the DPP might be frustrated that an insufficient number -- less than the required 50 percent of registered voters -- had participated in the two defensive referenda in March 2004, thus nullifying both. Apparently the DPP hopes a one-step voting process will help ensure the requisite 50 percent of registered voters participate in the referenda vote, thus validating the referendum (Note: A majority of those voters participating must then vote in favor of the referendum for it to actually pass). He reiterated that the U.S. remains deeply concerned over the DPP UN referenda, but stressed that we are also urging Beijing to exercise restraint and not overreact.

16. (C) Ma told the Director he believes local election commissions have the authority to run their own elections

TAIPEI 00002547 002 OF 004

under Article 8 of the Election and Recall Law. While the CEC claims local election commissions are under its jurisdiction and it has the power to appoint and remove local election officials, Ma continued, the CEC cannot possibly run elections without local government cooperation. So, "there must be some kind of compromise." (Note: Article 8 establishes a three-tier system of election commissions: central, provincial/ municipal, and county, each of which is "under the jurisdiction" of the immediately higher level and whose commissioners are recommended by that next higher level. The provincial level has since been abolished in Taiwan, however, blurring the lines of authority.)

17. (C) Ultimately, Ma claimed, only the LY is constitutionally empowered to resolve disputes between central and local governments. Why, Ma reiterated, did the CEC alter the two-step voting process used in the 2004 referenda? Ma said that it is difficult to impossible at this stage to predict the chances for passage of the four referenda at stake. Ma stressed that Taiwan voters are increasingly frustrated by the voting controversy and uninterested in the referendum vote. While the overwhelming majority of people support the right of Taiwan to join the UN, he said, this simply is not a high priority with voters.

18. (C) The Director expressed the hope that the two sides could cooperate and resolve the dispute. Fairness and orderliness of its democracy has been Taiwan's strong suit. By contrast, some other new democracies are encountering setbacks: Pakistan is experiencing serious problems and Georgia and Thailand recently suffered major setbacks. Taiwan, by contrast, has heretofore done it right. Both sides, the Director urged, need to remember this and resolve to work together to solve problems. None of us, he concluded, want to see conflict. The Director urged Ma, as he urged President Chen on November 26, to guard against allowing campaign differences, such as the current voting procedure dispute, evolve into an irreconcilable standoff between the ruling and opposition parties that could result in confrontation and damage Taiwan's democratic image. (Note: Later the same day, the Director passed a similar

version of this message to DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh via a telephone conversation with his campaign manager, Y.Y. Lee.)

#### The Martial Law Imbroglio

-----

¶9. (C) Ma charged that President Chen and the DPP are "just using emotionalism," stirring up voters with ethnic identity issues and Chen's November 25 martial law statement. He pointed out that Minister of National Defense Li Tien-yu had followed up Chen's martial law statement by explaining the Sixth Army would take charge of Taipei in the event martial law was declared. Ma, however, acknowledged the Director's point that President Chen had backpedaled the following day, explaining the KMT is "not really worried about martial law," because the president "clearly does not have the authority to do so." What worries him and the KMT, Ma continued, is "the fact that Chen raised" this sensitive issue in the first place. Noting that Hsieh had kept a low profile following Chen's statement and sought to avoid the issue, Ma said he had publicly challenged Hsieh to declare his stance.

¶10. (C) Ma told the Director he is more concerned about the possibility Chen might declare a state of emergency. While an emergency decree should be limited to natural disasters, Ma said, Chen might try to employ it for election purposes. The president, Ma continued, has the power to issue an emergency decree that expires in ten days, unless endorsed by the LY. "But ten days is long enough." Ma noted that Chen similarly used another exclusive presidential power to influence the March 2004 presidential election -- he invoked the presidential prerogative to call a "defensive referendum." (Note: Article 43 of the Constitution empowers the President to issue an emergency decree in the event of natural disaster, an epidemic, or economic crisis, but the LY

TAIPEI 00002547 003 OF 004

must confirm the decree within one month.)

¶11. (C) The Director responded that the U.S. is quite concerned that President Chen's actions might provoke Beijing to do something. While Beijing, for its part, regularly urges the U.S. to take a stronger action against President Chen, the Director assured Ma that there is no "co-management of Taiwan" between the U.S. and the PRC. The U.S., he explained, has very different interests in East Asia (and relative to Taiwan) than China. In particular, we see the use of force as totally unacceptable.

#### Private Conversation with Ma

-----

¶12. (C) In a separate private conversation, the Director asked Ma about his personal security, noting the concern earlier voiced by both Su Chi and KMT Vice Chairman P.K. Chiang to AIT (Ref B). Ma responded that this is certainly an issue of concern to him and his colleagues, but admitted they do not have any intelligence of a specific threat to Ma. He said simply that in his mind Chen Shui-bian is capable of anything. Ma added that his (and Hsieh's) official National Security Bureau-provided security detail will not start until the end of December, presenting a window of vulnerability as Ma campaigns around the islands.

¶13. (C) The Director queried Ma on the possibilities for cross-Strait dialogue in the event he wins the presidential election. In particular, the Director noted, how does Ma's stated willingness to negotiate with the PRC on the basis of "one-China, different interpretations" jibe with the PRC Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) willingness to negotiate on the basis of the "1992 consensus?" Ma responded that the two formulations are actually quite close and that he thinks they provide a reasonably good basis for negotiations to proceed quickly. The Director noted that the U.S. strongly supports the two sides of the Strait talking with each other as soon

as possible.

¶14. (C) The Director also asked Ma whether he is concerned the PRC might raise the bar on negotiations if Ma assumes the presidency. Ma responded negatively, insisting that the PRC is so ready for dialogue that it will move very quickly to seize the opportunity of a Ma presidency, in part just to show up Chen Shui-bian and the DPP. (Note: Separately, former Mainland Affairs Chairman Su Chi told POL Chief that Ma is deliberately mixing the two terms "1992 consensus" and "one China, different interpretations" in his public statements in an effort to blur the difference and provide a practical bridge for dialogue. He and Ma believe that Beijing may be so eager for dialogue and to get the Taiwan independence issue off the table that it will accept this obfuscation.)

Keeping Faith With Democracy  
-----

¶15. (C) Finally, the Director stressed to Ma in their private conversation the importance of Taiwan political leaders managing and keeping passions at bay in order to protect Taiwan's new democracy. Ma agreed, insisting the KMT will do nothing to undercut peaceful and fair elections. It is important, the Director concluded, to continue moving Taiwan's democratization forward in order to build a strong precedence for good governance for the next president.

Burghardt Visit  
-----

¶16. (C) The Director told Ma that AIT Chairman Ray Burghardt will visit Taipei on December 9-10, and would like to meet with both Ma and Hsieh, in addition to President Chen. Ma replied that he would be happy to meet with Chairman Burghardt.

TAIPEI 00002547 004 OF 004

Comment  
-----

¶17. (C) On the possibility of a DPP physical threat to Ma, we suspect this is more a reflection of KMT anxiety that their opponents will find some dramatic way (viz. the election eve assassination attempt of 2004, which KMT hardliners remain convinced, without evidence, was fixed) to edge them out in next March's election than a tangible fear. Nonetheless, we will continue to keep our own ear to the ground, and to highlight the importance of moderation to both camps.  
YOUNG